

Spectrum

Navy welcomes Sailors home

Bonnie Heater

Signal staff

Members of the Navy community at Fort Gordon welcomed home more than 90 Sailors Aug. 15.

The Sailors had been deployed for the past six months from April 1 to July 31 on surface ships, submarines and on the ground in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Volunteers, members of the Navy Information Operations Command Georgia Command Georgia Family Readiness Group and corporate sponsors helped put on the Navy's "Welcome Home Celebration for deployed Sailors and their Families" in the Kegler's Lounge at the Gordon Lanes Bowling Center. After Petty Officer 1st Class Hellen Lynch sang the national anthem, Navy Lt. Daniel Klender, NAVIOCOM Georgia chaplain, gave the invocation.

Jessica Roe, the command's Family Readiness Group president, welcomed everyone and introduced the keynote speaker, Navy Capt. Michael Fisher, NAVIOCOM Georgia commanding officer.

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**Capt. Michael Fisher
Commanding Officer**

Navy Information Operations Command Georgia

"Good morning shipmates. Today I would like to welcome home our shipmates from their deployment," he said. "Through the efforts of the Navy Information Operations Command Georgia Family Readiness Group we are able to provide the recognition and thanks that our Sailors who were deployed so deeply deserve."

The commander thanked the Fleet Readiness Group for all their efforts in putting on the welcome home special event.

Fisher said, "Our command has a very dynamic deployment mission supporting the Global War on Terrorism. Our Sailors support all facets of information warfare on surface ships, submarines, aircraft, as well as supporting ground units from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to the United States Central Command area of responsibility. These Sailors' expertise not only provided cryptologic support to naval strike groups, but they have answered the call serving along side Army and Marine Corps units on the ground."

"Traditional Navy sea-going commands deployed together and returned home together, thus providing an easier opportunity for a welcome home ceremony," he said. "Our Sailors are a different breed. At any given time we have 80 to 120 Sailors deployed throughout the world providing linguistic, analytic and communications support. Depending on the unit they are assigned to, deployments can last from 60 days up to 15 months. Our Sailors deploy as individual augmenters enhance a unit's capability or as a complete information warfare team. This makes traditional welcome home celebrations very difficult to organize and schedule."

"Our goal, the NIOC Georgia Family Readiness Groups' goal, is to make this celebration a quarterly event to recognize those Sailors who have been placed in harm's way and far away from their homes and Families for many months," Fisher said.

"Today we are welcoming home approximately 90 Sailors who since the first of April through July 31, 2008 have returned home," he said. "Some of these Sailors had returned and already left again for another deployment. [Two of the returning Sailors – Ensign Devin Mayer and Petty Officer 1st Class Edward McCormick already have new assignments. Mayer left Aug. 21, for another deployment; McCormick leaves Aug. 25 for further training with a deployment in September.]

"Some have transferred to their next command assignments,

and some have transitioned back to civilian life," added the Navy commander. In any case, this does not diminish their dedicated accomplishments while they were deployed. We would like to say "Thank you," to each and every one of you wherever you may be.

"However, this celebration is not only to recognize the Sailor, but to recognize the sacrifices of the Families who held the home front while the Sailor was deployed," the commander added. "Without their support we would not have been able to accomplish our mission. So today it is with great pleasure for me to say "Thank you" for your dedication, service and sacrifice to your Navy, our military and our country."

Following the commander's remarks, returning Sailors received gifts of appreciation from the NAVIOCOM Georgia Family Readiness Group and several local supporters. After some refreshments were served, door prizes were drawn. Some of the local businesses donating gifts, cash prizes, and gift certificates were Picture People at the Augusta Mall, Target Store in the Augusta Exchange on Wheeler Road, Partridge Inn on Walton Way, Earthfare Market in Evans, Ga., and River Banks Zoo in Columbia, S.C.

"We had a lot of community support in planning this celebration and we appreciate it," said Chief Petty Officer Ronnie Brown, NAVIOCOM Georgia Family Assistance coordinator.



Photos by Bonnie Heater



(Left) Navy Capt. Michael Fisher, Navy Information Operations Command Georgia commanding officer, gives opening remarks and expresses words of appreciation at the Navy's Welcome Home Celebration held at Kegler's Lounge in the Gordon Lanes Bowling Center Aug. 15. **(Right)** A photojournalist from WAGT-TV NBC Augusta video tapes the celebration.



(Above) Petty Officer 1st Class Hellen Lynch sings the national anthem at the NAVIOCOM Georgia Welcome Home celebration. **(Right)** Chief Petty Officer Ronnie Brown, NAVIOCOM Georgia Family Assistance coordinator, [in uniform] talks to Petty Officer 2nd Class Shayne Tabbert (sporting glasses) and Petty Officer 3rd Class Robert Curtee about their deployments. Both said they missed their Families and real food.



(Above) Enjoying the Navy's welcome home festivities are (Counterclockwise) Petty Officer 1st Class William Payne and his wife Rebecca; Petty Officer 1st Class Leonard Frakelia and his wife Tamieka and their baby McKayla; and Petty Officer 1st Class Julio Franco. **(Below)** Navy Shipmates and their Families celebrate the return of more than 90 Sailors from deployments with good food and entertainment.

